

NSC BRIEFING

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20 April 1955

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SOVIET OFFER OF AUSTRIA TREATY

- I. Board of National Estimates believes that new Soviet offer of peace treaty to Austria is made in all seriousness.
- A. Although USSR can always produce last-minute gimmick, (tying treaty to German issue or seeking right of post-treaty intervention), so far indications are Kremlin intends to go through with treaty.
- II. If--as we expect--USSR does so, action will be highly significant, and will indicate a new flexibility in Soviet policy following Stalin's death.
- A. Would mark first substantial Soviet concession in Europe since end World War II.

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USSR position in Austria not vital to Soviet, we have previously considered USSR would tie settlement small Austrian problem to larger one of Germany (as Molotov said at Berlin).

B. Fact USSR now apparently willing to reverse long-standing policy procrastination, settle Austrian treaty separately, indicates--in our view--Soviet concern at recent international developments.

1. Bohlen reports, after recent talk with Bulganin, his impression of "greater degree of uncertainty and even concern in Soviet government at general international situation."

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III. Causes of apparent Soviet policy rever-

sal many and complex, but chief among them is probably Soviet concern over situation created by ratification of Paris accords.

A. Soviet are preoccupied with threat of a rearmed, pro-Western Germany.

B. French ratification of accords probably forced USSR to make move on Austria, to restore maneuverability on German question.

1. Kremlin must estimate that reunification plus neutralization, on Austrian model, HAVE POWERFUL APPEAL AND WILL will lead to West German pressure for postponement rearmament while new negotiations take place.

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2. USSR can still play it both ways: if Austrian move has hoped-for repercussions on German question, Kremlin can go through with treaty; if it fails, can renege at last minute, blame West for failure.

C. We believe that threatening situation in Far East, together with Soviet desire to reinforce neutralist opposition to US Far East policy, also a factor in USSR's Austrian gambit.

1. Disagree, however, with Lippmann view that Soviet desire to neutralize and protect its European rear in case of Far East hostilities was dominant Soviet motive.

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We hold that USSR is at least as
much, if not more, concerned over

European as over Far East problems.

D. Another factor in Austrian gambit many
have been Soviet desire to insure
Austrian neutralization.

1. Given likely Soviet suspicions that
US plans bases in Western Austria,
USSR may have been willing to pay
price for Swiss-type neutrality.
2. Perhaps Soviets are moving toward
broader buffer zone of neutral
states as counter to US "encircle-
ment."

IV. One major lesson to be learned from Austrian
settlement is new flexibility of Soviet
policy, and possibility of further moves.

A. Austrian move may reflect uncertainty
of new collegial Soviet leadership and
its concern over recent trend of cold
war.

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B. In background may be Soviet words

over nuclear arms race

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1. Despite Moscow's careful repudiation of Malenkov remark that World War III could mean end of civilization, Mikoyan last week told Austrian State Secretary Kreisky that Soviet development of nuclear weapons had involved "frightful cost."

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